When they first realised that it was impending they made hysterical efforts to fend it off. When it became a fact, they accepted the prospect of serving under my leadership with bitter reluctance. As to some of them, there was no time up to the end when they would not have welcomed my resignation. That added to my difficulties in moments calling for critical decision, and their attitude impeded and once or twice thwarted my efforts. To understand their attitude it was necessary to bear in mind that there had never before been a " ranker " raised to the Premiership—certainly not one except Disraeli who had not passed through the Staff College of the old Universities.

As to the attitude of the Labour Party, I had as yet no information, inasmuch as I had not come into contact with them either directly or indirectly during the negotiations. All I knew was that in Asquithian circles there was the most complete confidence that no Tory leader except Bonar Law and Carson would serve under me, and that the Labour Party would have nothing to do with a Lloyd George administration.

The prospect of success in the formation of a Ministry assured of reliable Parliamentary support was therefore at that period not encouraging. The prospect of life for the Government was placed in influential

Unpromising outlook

circles at six weeks. However, I decided to undertake the duty entrusted to me by the Sovereign and to do my best to form a Government that would organise the strength of the Nation for victory and thus gradually command its confidence. I felt strongly that failure would mean that the kind of flabby direction which had jeopardised the chance of